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Virginia Records 100 Percent Increase in Unbelted Fatalities for Ages 15-20 2018 Preliminary Data Reveal Alarming Trends

RICHMOND, Va. – The number of people ages 15 to 20 who died not wearing seatbelts during motor vehicle crashes doubled from January 1 through June 30, 2018, compared to the same time period last year. Eighteen unrestrained fatalities have been recorded this year, compared to nine from January to June 2017 and 10 in 2016.

“We must find a way to reverse this startling trend,” said Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine. “Safety is our highest priority. Simply by wearing a seatbelt, you can reduce the risk of dying in a vehicle crash by 45 percent.”

The localities in which the 18 unrestrained fatalities for ages 15 to 20 occurred are:

Amherst County	1	King William County	1
Appomattox County	1	Mecklenburg County	1
Bedford County	2	Prince William County	1
Campbell County	1	Shenandoah County	1
Fauquier County	1	Southampton County	2
Frederick County	1	Richmond City	1
Goochland County	1	Washington County	2
Henry County	1		

Virginia also recorded a 34 percent increase in the number of people age 21-35 who died not wearing seatbelts in crashes. From January to June 2017, 41 unrestrained fatalities were recorded; in 2018, 55 were recorded.

The total number of unbelted fatalities for the first six months of 2018 is the same as this time last year, 138. In all of 2017, 52 percent motor vehicle occupant fatalities were people who did not put on their seatbelts. A total of 843 people died last year as a result of crashes, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb added, “Think about it this way. When you’re in a moving vehicle, your body is moving at the same speed. When the vehicle stops, you need to stop, too. The only way to ensure that happens is by being buckled into the vehicle. Otherwise, your body’s unbelted momentum can result in being tossed around inside or even ejected from the vehicle. That’s how people get killed and injured in crashes. One click – problem solved.”

While the Commonwealth does not have a primary seat belt law, Virginia law does requires all drivers and front seat passengers to wear safety belts. All passengers under age 18 must be restrained in a seat belt or child safety seat. Drivers may be held responsible for paying fines and related court costs if their passengers are not buckled in.